LINCOLN AND SLAVERY

BY

ALBERT E. PILLSBURY

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THIS brief review of Abraham Lincoln's real attitude toward Slavery and Emancipation originated in an address delivered at Howard University on the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. It is now extended by the introduction of historical evidence, principally from Lincoln himself, which that occasion did not permit. Apart from his conduct, which speaks for itself to those who look beneath the surface of it, nothing can contribute so much as his own words to a true understanding of this great American in the supreme act of his life and one of the monumental events in the world's history.

BOSTON, September 1, 1913.

LINCOLN AND SLAVERY

When the conflict between Freedom and Slavery in this nation was approaching its crisis, in the struggle for possession of the Nebraska territory, a new and singular figure appeared at the front of political battle in the West, moved to the head of events, passed across the world's stage, and in the short space of seven years had vanished from the sight of man.

Within such narrow bounds of time lies a career the like of which is not to be found in history. In the elements of wonder and marvel, the story of Abraham Lincoln's life and death is without parallel or example. From the

mean cabin in the Kentucky woods to the final peak of transfiguration, it moves in the successive acts of a great tragic drama, reaching the high-water mark of human achievement and sounding every note in the gamut of human emotion.

In the scant half-century since his death, Abraham Lincoln has engrossed more of the world's attention than any other historic personage. Untiring research has tracked him from the cradle to the tomb. The remotest spot trodden by his foot is explored, the last relative, friend, or acquaintance examined for any word or look of the great man, every act of his life is studied, every line of his written or spoken words put under review, the last fragment of his correspondence or memoranda is drawn

from its hiding-place or is on the way to be, every trait of his character, every mood of his mind, every feature or expression of his face, his figure, his pose, his movement, is canvassed, printed, and eagerly read, his biographers are now becoming the subject of biography, and the Lincoln literature overflows the libraries day by day.

The materials now assembled tell us vastly more about Lincoln and his true relation to events than the people had found out in his own time. All contemporary judgment of him is defective for want of knowledge, and there is much of it which history must now reject. This plain American citizen was one of the most complex and inscrutable of all the great historic characters. He was full of the oddest incongruities.

By turns a man of jest and laughter and again "dripping," as a friend said, with melancholy; ranging in thought and speech from unquotable plainness to the heights of the human intellect; a shrewd, practical lawyer and politician dwelling among shadows, dreaming dreams, seeing portents and feeling mysterious influences that affected his conduct; the most unpretentious of men, set in the homeliest framework, thinking with the power of Plato, seeing with the eye of the Sibyl, speaking like the Hebrew prophets. The story of his life abounds in grotesque incident, always of the humanest character. The strapping young giant of eighteen takes upon his back a worthless drunkard, perishing with cold, and totes him a mile to shelter. The lawyer riding the

circuit goes back upon his trail to pull a hapless pig out of the mud or restore young birds to their nest. The official head of the nation, appealed to in the public street by a maimed soldier, sits down with him at the foot of the first convenient tree to write an order for his relief. The maker of an epoch opens his cabinet council with a chapter of Artemus Ward, and checks the laughter to present the Emancipation Proclamation.

Yet more strange and startling are the dramatic shifts of scene and circumstance that attend the unfolding of this unique character. The forlorn backwoods boy turns out to be the appointed head of a great nation, in a crisis affecting the fate of the world. The obscure country lawyer reveals in

a phrase what a people is waiting to hear, and becomes in a day the prophet of the cause. The uncouth Westerner from the prairies, unpracticed in arms or in statecraft, outmasters the statesmen, outwits the diplomatists, gives the generals their plan of campaign. The unlettered man of the people speaks lofty eloquence, soon to become classic. The raw politician, who never held public power for a day, takes the helm of state when the ship is already on the rocks, when all the pilots and captains stand helpless and appalled, to bring her in safety and triumph through the storm. The awkward clown, reviled and lampooned over two continents, in four years is canonized by mankind. Without origin, without training, without an ex-

ternal attraction, without a worldly advantage, the meanly-born child of a poor and shiftless emigrant makes his way out of the wilderness to fix for all time the eyes of the world as leader of a people, liberator of the slave, deliverer of his country, and in another turn of the kaleidoscope, to be numbered with martyrs and saints in glory everlasting.

These are historical facts, but they dazzle the imagination and disturb the judgment. All through the web of this life are woven threads of marvel and mystery. People read about Lincoln with a weird sense of the supernatural, of something apart from human affairs. They think of another Man of Sorrows, and the journey from the manger to the cross, the crime of Cain, the translation

of Elijah. Nothing in human biography stirs the imagination like this. The man of history is already become a man of fable, and in some distant day learned doctors will dispute whether Abraham Lincoln was a real character or a hero of tradition, belonging in limbo with Romulus and King Arthur.

What was this man, that he has taken such a marvelous hold upon the interest of the world? What was there in him or about him that makes us distrust our senses as we follow the steps of his amazing progress? Do we see him as he was, or do we see an image, an aureole, a legendary figure?

Abraham Lincoln is not a myth, nor is he like any other man. A man of destiny, if there is such a character in history, a man of many mysteries, his

hold upon mankind is not a mystery. He was a new type of man — "new birth of our new soil," an unspoiled product of nature to whom all the world is akin. History is full of personages who strike the eye with great and illustrious deeds. Here is one of the foremost of them who stirs the heart with every element of human sympathy. More than this, he touches the universal instinct of freedom, a chord that vibrates around the world. Abraham Lincoln is forever identified with the cause of human liberty. When all his other greatness is forgotten, history and legend will remember him as emancipator of a race and martyr of freedom.

For this he is receiving, and he will continue to receive, the homage of the

world. Does it belong to him? Doubts are cast upon his title, by indirection if not directly. Was Abraham Lincoln a moral hero, whose place is among the foremost of mankind, or was he a mere time-server, a mere Union-saver, wielding power with the cold hand of political expediency, careless that the fate of a race or of freedom itself might be staked upon the issue, who came hesitating and reluctant to Emancipation and decreed the freedom of millions as an unavoidable move in the game of war? Which is the real Abraham Lincoln?

There is a belated but persisting view of this great character as a sort of sublimated politician, concerned only with saving the Union, by any means at his command, indifferent to the national

crime of slavery and willing to see it continue if so the Union could be preserved. It originated in the complaints of hot and impatient anti-slavery leaders before Lincoln was firm in the presidency, and is now taken up and perpetuated by all the apologists for slavery and rebellion. If this is a correct estimate of his character, he never rose to the moral level of his own act of emancipation, and the exaltation of such a man into a world-hero is a delusion.

A profound question of right and wrong underlies the rebellion and the events that produced it, by which the claim of Abraham Lincoln to the true title of Emancipator must finally be tried. We are now living in a generation that never saw Freedom and Slavery facing

each other. It has become fashionable to divert public attention from the moving cause of a bloody war, lest the truth may offend some sensibilities or mar some reputations. We are told that the war, on the part of the South, was a patriotic if misguided attempt to vindicate the rights of the States, and on the part of the North, a war for the Union. In the interest of national harmony we must shut the skeleton slavery into the closet and turn the key upon it, politely ignoring historical truth. A part of the popular perversion of history is to make Lincoln appear indifferent to slavery, and willing to save it if he could save the Union. So shall the reverence paid to his memory help to cover the ancient guilt and justify the new bondage of the oppressed race.

What is the historical truth? From 1820 to the downfall of the rebellion, every question of American politics turned, directly or indirectly, upon slavery. A war for vindication of state rights? After 1833, when the illumined logic of Webster and the grim front of Andrew Jackson had disposed of nullification, the first fruit of the slave system, the right of a state to secede from the Union was, as Lincoln truly said, no longer an open or debatable question, and no state rights were ever in dispute. The right to hunt slaves in the free states, and to carry slavery into free territory, were not state rights. If they were rights at all, they were personal rights of the slaveholder. A war for the Union? Nothing but slavery ever threatened the Union. The South-

ern states did not make the war, nor the Southern people. They were whipped into it by a slaveholding oligarchy, that never embraced a tenth of the white population of the South but ruled the majority with an iron hand in the interest of the slave system. The war was a slaveholders' rebellion, treasonably waged against the United States for the single purpose of establishing upon this continent an independent slave-empire. In Lincoln's words, it was "an attempt, for the first time in the world, to construct a new nation on the basis of human slavery." It was a war about slavery, and about nothing else. It accomplished the extinction of slavery, and it accomplished nothing else. Witness the record, as written by the people in the three Amendments of the Con-

stitution, every line directed to secure the freedom of the emancipated slave.

If slavery was a wicked system, a war to perpetuate it was a twice-wicked war. For the iniquity of slavery we need not rely upon preachers or moralists, or the universal opinion of all enlightened men and Christian nations. It was openly confessed by the whole American people when the United States in 1820 joined with the other great powers of the world in branding the slave-trade as piracy and punishing it with death. If any distinction can be drawn between the guilt of the slave-trader, a mere incident of the system, and the guilt of the slaveholder, who constituted the system, it is not in favor of the slaveholder.

If Abraham Lincoln, alive to the

moral aspect of slavery, seized the first opportunity to strike it down as fatal to the principles of justice and liberty on which a restored or permanent Union must depend, insisting that freedom should be made universal for all time by writing it into the Federal charter, he was in truth the Emancipator. My purpose is to recall some of the historical evidences in which his true attitude toward slavery and emancipation appears.

The contest between Freedom and Slavery, breaking out openly in the admission of Missouri to the Union as a slave state and temporarily suppressed by the compromise forbidding slavery north of the 36-30 line, was thenceforth the only vital issue before the American people. The slave-power, aggressive

and defiant, advanced with startling strides through the annexation of Texas, the Mexican war, the compromise-surrender of 1850, the repeal of the Missouri compromise, the raid upon the Nebraska territory then embracing Kansas, and the Dred Scott manifesto of the Supreme Court, a decree that "went forth without authority and came back without respect," declaring the Federal Constitution a charter for slavery in the free territories. This course of events produced the Abraham Lincoln of history.

What had been the general attitude toward slavery of the man who issued the Emancipation Proclamation? What did Lincoln think about slavery before he became a public character?

We need not hear him say, as he often said, that he "always hated slavery," the words of a man slow to censure and not a man of hate. It was Abraham Lincoln who pronounced the completest judgment against slavery ever put in words. "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." "I cannot remember," he says, "when I did not so think and feel."

Was it the intuition of a spirited child born into a system that degraded white poverty even more than it degraded the negro, or did it begin with the flatboat trip to New Orleans, when slavery, witness John Hanks, "ran its iron into him" at the first sight of the lash and the auction-block? His nearest friend and biographer gives credit to the story, curious and suggestive if true, that he

then and there said to his companions, with an imprecation that rarely issued from his lips, "Boys, if I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." A forgotten lecture, produced by the young Lincoln in his twenties, declares the freeing of slaves to be one of the highest objects of human achievement. What put this into the head of the backwoods youth in a pro-slavery community? The burning of a negro by a St. Louis mob stirred him to one of his earliest speeches — on Liberty, the subject always uppermost in his mind — a speech that has the added interest of showing that Lincoln, like Webster, began with a grandiloquent manner, imitated from the spread-eagle oratory of the period, before he developed his own inimitable style.

If Abraham Lincoln ever uttered a word in extenuation of slavery, the fact has not appeared in history. It needs not his words to show how he felt toward such a system. His whole life, now open to the world, was an all-embracing sympathy with the oppressed and down-trodden that beat in every pulsation of his heart. To hate slavery was in his blood. It was a law of his being.

What was Lincoln's attitude toward slavery as a public character and political leader?

The first significant public act of his life, in the Illinois legislature at the age of twenty-eight, was the recorded protest against resolutions asserting the "sacred" right of property in slaves, a

claim which Lincoln always resented as profanation. The protest, so moderate that it now appears apologetic, was then so bold that but one colleague could be found to stand with him. Illinois was still pro-slavery, with a "black code" of unsparing severity, and but a few years removed from an attempt to make it a slave state. This was the year of Lovejoy's murder by the Alton mob, uncondemned and unpunished by Illinois, when nothing but the timely appearance of Wendell Phillips saved Faneuil Hall from capture by the apologists for that crime against humanity.

In his single term in Congress Lincoln stood with the most advanced opponents of slavery, joining in all their denunciations of the Mexican war, which he stigmatized in his "spot reso-

lutions" then celebrated but now forgotten, voting "at least forty times," as he said, for the Wilmot Proviso, and finally introducing a bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. This measure, wrenched out of the setting of 1849 in which it belongs, has been supposed to show a tenderness toward slavery. Moderate and guarded as it was, there is no doubt that Lincoln risked his political future in presenting it. As a direct step toward abolition in the only place where slavery existed within reach of Federal power, an act finally accomplished after many years only by stress of war, when it was Lincoln's privilege to seal it with his official approval, it branded him in politics as an abolitionist, and many of his friends believed that his open hostility to slav-

ery had sacrificed all hope of political advancement.

Indeed, when Lincoln returned from Congress he seems to have regarded himself as through with public affairs. There are signs at this time of his temperamental depression. The revelation had not come to him. But the Compromise of 1850 stirred him uneasily and would not let him rest. He said to his friend Stuart, "The time will come when we must all be Democrats or Abolitionists. When that time comes, my mind is made up. The slavery question can't be compromised." This set him to brooding deeply upon slavery and its bearing upon the fate of the nation, on which it is now historic that he became the clearest and profoundest thinker of his time. It took possession

of him. He "moused around the libraries," absorbing the history of the institution and pondering every phase of the subject in long fits of silent abstraction. A manuscript fragment of this period, of which it is said that he usually carried a hatful, goes to the roots of slavery and gives a glimpse at the working habit and logical precision of his mind:—

"If A can prove, however conclusively, that he may of right enslave B, why may not B snatch the same argument and prove equally that he may enslave A? You say A is white and B is black. It is color, then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own. You do not mean color exactly? You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors

of the blacks, and therefore they have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own. But, you say, it is a question of interest, and if you make it your interest, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you."

Lincoln's clear and direct intellect went straight to the question whether Slavery and Freedom can permanently dwell together in the same house. In this interval he read the horoscope of slavery, and when he began to speak out, it was like the voice of a prophet denouncing the vision.

The threat to repeal the Missouri Compromise, opening to slavery the territory long pledged to freedom, aroused

Lincoln once for all. From this time he avowed his purpose to press the assault against slavery to the limit of Federal power, "until the sun shall shine, the rain shall fall, the wind shall blow, upon no man who goes forth to unrequited toil." The Peoria speech of 1854, plainly the product of deep thought and unfolding for the first time Lincoln's matured mental attitude, forecasts all his later utterances in putting political opposition to slavery squarely upon the moral ground, denouncing the iniquity of the system and openly declaring, as the final reason against it on which the battle must turn, that slavery is wrong. It was the precursor of the celebrated "lost speech" of 1856 at Bloomington, and those who heard both declare that on each occasion he was so wrought

up with his theme as fairly to "quiver with emotion." Nothing ever stirred Lincoln like slavery, the subject of all his later speeches, or moved him to such eloquence and depth of feeling. Denouncing slavery as "the only thing that ever endangered the Union," he takes the field against it at Peoria in utterances like these: —

"This declared indifference but, as I must think, covert zeal for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many really good men among ourselves into an open war with the

very fundamental principles of civil liberty."

"If the negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he too shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government — that is despotism. If the negro is a man, then my ancient faith teaches me that all men are created equal, and that there can be no moral right in one man making a slave of another."

"No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

"The master not only governs the slave without his consent, but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those which he prescribes for himself. Allow all the governed an

equal voice in the government; that, and that only, is self-government."

"Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature — opposition to it, in his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism; and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise — repeal all compromises — repeal the Declaration of Independence — repeal all past history — still you cannot repeal human nature."

"I particularly object to the new position which the avowed principle of this Nebraska law gives to slavery in the body politic. I object to it because it assumes that there can be moral right in the enslaving of one man by another."

"Little by little, but steadily as man's march to the grave, we have been giv-

ing up the old for the new faith. Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration that for some men to enslave others is a 'sacred right of self-government.' These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon."

"In our greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware lest we cancel and tear in pieces even the white man's charter of freedom. Our republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of 'moral right' back upon its existing legal rights and its arguments of 'necessity.'"

Three years later, in a speech at Springfield, he draws this picture: —

"In those days our Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all, and thought to include all; but now, to aid in making the bondage of the negro universal and eternal, it is assailed, sneered at, construed, hawked at, and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not recognize it. All the powers of the earth seem rapidly combining against him. Mammon is after him; ambition follows; philosophy follows; and the theology of the day is fast joining the cry. They have him in his prison-house; they have searched his person and left no prying instrument with him. One after another, they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him; and now they have him, as it were, bolted in, with a lock of a hundred keys, which can never be unlocked without the consent of every key; the keys in the hands of a hundred different men, and they scattered to a hundred different and distant places; and they

stand musing as to what invention, in all the dominions of mind and matter, can be produced to make the impossibility of his escape more complete than it is."

Again, he answers to the bogey of "negro equality," a ghost that never could be laid and stalks abroad in its most forbidding shape after half a century of freedom:—

"I protest against the counterfeit logic which concludes that because I do not want a black woman for a slave, I must necessarily want her for a wife."

"All I ask for the negro is that if you do not like him, let him alone. If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy."

"I hold that there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right

to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man. I agree that he is not my equal in many respects, certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment; but in the right to eat the bread without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of every living man." the equal of Judge Douglas,

Lincoln, the politician, was now speaking apostolic words of freedom. Putting polite phrases and compromising shifts behind him, he brings slavery to the bar of political opinion as a system of iniquity, lifting the discussion into the realm of morals and making an issue which even a politician's conscience cannot evade. The struggle between Freedom and Slavery was now centered upon Douglas's Nebraska bill. As the

most conspicuous opponent of this measure, Lincoln took his stand upon the moral wrong of the slave system, and all the anti-slavery forces, then crystallizing into a new and powerful political party, had to follow and stand with him upon that ground. The abolitionists had gone before him and done their work, of which Lincoln himself may have been a part. His bosom companion Herndon, an ardent disciple of Garrison and Theodore Parker, declared that Lincoln was "baptized into the abolition church" on the occasion of the Bloomington speech. The abolitionists had planted and watered, but it remained to gather the increase. They could not harvest in political conventions or in the ballot-box the crop which they had sown. At the oppor-

tune moment, Lincoln appeared in the field and hitched the moral forces of abolition to the moving car of political events.

Following the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and while the battle was still raging in Kansas, came the Dred Scott declaration of the Supreme Court that the Federal Constitution forbade the exclusion of slavery from the free territories. Lincoln's acute political vision at once perceived that the same doctrine, if carried a step farther, would make slavery lawful in the free states. He challenged the attention of the country to the new peril in that history-making speech now memorable and familiar: —

"'A house divided against itself can-

not stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South."

This was the trumpet calling to battle. Nothing like it had ever been heard from a recognized political leader. It antedated and outran Seward's "irrepressible conflict," and it came from a man whose words were shaping the course of momentous political events.

This was Lincoln's response to the Dred Scott declaration, and marks the next line of his advance. Slavery is irreconcilable not only with Union, but with freedom in the free states. If it goes on, it will become universal. The time has come when the people must set their house in order, by putting it in course of extinction. The words mean nothing less than this, and the bold and startling figure drove the meaning home. In this speech Lincoln fairly put slavery on the defensive before the political power of the nation. With a full sense of its importance, he had consulted his friends, who warned him against a declaration so radical as to invite defeat. To this Lincoln replied, "with strong emotion," as we are told, "The time has come when this should be said. If

I must go down, let me go down linked to the truth. This nation cannot live on injustice." To the reproaches that followed the speech he rejoined, "If I had to draw pen across my whole record leaving one thing unerased, it should be that speech. You will live to regard it as the wisest thing I ever said."

It is recorded that to those about him Lincoln was now as one inspired. "Sometimes," he says, "I seem to see the end of slavery. I feel that the time is soon coming. How it will come, when it will come, by whom it will come, I cannot tell, but that time will surely come."

The debate with Douglas followed, now classic in history and literature. Was it chance or destiny that gave Lin-

coln this opportunity? The influence of Douglas upon Lincoln's career is a curious episode in a life full of strange events. Rivals in their early years at the bar, rivals for the hand of a woman, rivals in politics, and finally for the highest political distinction, the revelation of Abraham Lincoln to the country was outwardly due to the circumstance that his home was the home of Douglas. As leader of the pro-slavery forces, author and principal exponent of the Nebraska bill, now engaged in a "squabble," as Lincoln called it, with the titular head of his party, and struggling to keep his hold on Illinois and his place in the Senate, Douglas held the center of the political stage, in the fiercest light of publicity. In this reflected light Lincoln first became visible to the nation,

as the only champion fit to enter the lists against the most adroit, audacious, and resourceful of all the protagonists of slavery. After the great debate is over, and after Douglas has gone down in "the battle of 1860," a whimsical fate makes him reappear on the inaugural platform at the Capitol, to publicly emphasize his position as a Union man, where he takes upon himself the modest office of holding Lincoln's hat while that lifelong adversary is crowned with the republican diadem.

Nothing in the annals of our political forum but the meeting of Webster with Hayne and Calhoun can be compared, in the magnitude of its consequences, to the contest of 1858. Douglas meant to make his quarrel with Buchanan win the battle for him, by dividing the anti-

Nebraska men. In this he would have succeeded against any opponent less wary and resolute than Lincoln, who held him, with a grip that never relaxed, to the moral issue of the right or wrong of slavery. Here Douglas was fatally weak and foredoomed to ultimate defeat. In an unguarded moment he had dropped the remark that he did not "care whether slavery is voted up or voted down." The fatal persistence with which he was held to this unhappy admission is a striking example of Lincoln's skill and sagacity in managing an argument or a cause. In the historic question put to Douglas at Freeport, whether the people of a territory can in any lawful way exclude slavery, Lincoln again displayed the foresight and courage of a great leader. Said his

friends, "If you put that question to Douglas, he will beat you and win the senatorship," to which Lincoln quietly rejoined, "I am hunting larger game. If he answers the question he can never be president, and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." He had to answer yes, or lose Illinois, and "of that answer," as Herndon said, "Douglas instantly died." Under the compelling hand of the master politician, he had flung away the South and rent the party of slavery in twain.

Among Lincoln's gifts none, perhaps, is more remarkable than his power of forecasting the future. Did he already see the destiny that was opening before him? The significance of this answer to his friends is almost unmistakable. Did he already see the slave-power

disintegrated and broken, the champion of freedom in this debate at the head of the party of freedom in "the battle of 1860," and prevailing victorious over a divided enemy? This is not incapable of belief, but he made no sign. It turned out to be the course of history. When the contest of 1858 was over, Lincoln had lost the senatorship to Douglas and Douglas had lost the presidency to Lincoln, who had bagged the "larger game" and won the mighty opportunity of reconsecrating the Union to freedom.

Rarely has oratory raised a more striking monument to its own power than in the utterances of Lincoln, made without a thought of oratorical effect, from the political stump. Before the

encounter with Douglas, he was a man untried, and beyond the bounds of a single state, almost unknown. In two years, a dozen speeches had put him at the head of the nation. There were qualities in Lincoln's words, public or private, that made him unforgettable. His lips dropped apologues and apothegms. He would put an argument into a barbed arrow of speech that went straight to its mark and stuck there. His remorseless logic could "snake a sophism out of its hole," as John Hay said, with a deadly certainty of which no other political leader of his time was capable. Take from the speeches against the extension of slavery a single example of apt and biting illustration that forecloses all debate: —

"If I saw a venomous snake crawling

in the road, any man would say I might seize the nearest stick and kill it; but if I found that snake in bed with my children, that would be another question. I might hurt the children more than the snake. Much more, if I found it in bed with my neighbor's children, and I had bound myself by a solemn compact not to meddle with his children under any circumstances. But if there was a bed newly made up, to which the children were to be taken, and it was proposed to take a batch of snakes and put them there with the children, I take it no man would say there was any question how I ought to decide."

He demolished the whole argument of Douglas in a couple of sententious phrases that could not be answered or dislodged from the public mind. "Popular sovereignty," he said, "means that if one man chooses to make a slave of another man, neither that man nor any

other man shall have a right to object." When he had forced from Douglas the opinion, in the face of the Dred Scott case, that slavery could be excluded from the territories, he summed up the position in a dozen words that made further protestation a vain beating of the air. "Douglas holds that slavery may lawfully be driven away from a place where it has a lawful right to stay."

Yet no arts of speech or genius for debate could have given Lincoln his primacy, or his hold upon the people, without the moral power and depth of conviction revealed in the lofty utterances to which he often rose, as in the letter to the Boston men on Jefferson's birthday:—

"He who would be no slave must

consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God, cannot long retain it."

What was Lincoln's attitude and purpose toward slavery as he approached the presidency?

This was a question of deep interest to the political leaders, as they saw this untried man about to assume the executive power of the nation. The best source of authentic information was Herndon, Lincoln's law-partner, himself a remarkable character and closer to Lincoln for many years than any other. To the inquiries of a Massachusetts senator, Herndon responded with this portrait, now of historic fidelity: —

"Lincoln is a man of heart, — aye, as gentle as a woman's and as tender, —

but he has a will strong as iron. He loves all mankind, hates slavery and every form of despotism. Put these together — love for the slave, and a determination, a will, that justice, strong and unyielding, shall be done when he has the right to act, and you can form your own conclusion. Lincoln will fail here, namely, if a question of political economy — if any question comes up which is doubtful, questionable, which no man can demonstrate, then his friends can rule him; but when on Justice, Right, Liberty, the Government, the Constitution, and the Union, then you may all stand aside: he will rule then, and no man can move him — no set of men can do it. This is Lincoln, and you mark my prediction."

On his journey to the Capital, Lincoln said to the people of Philadelphia at Independence Hall: —

"I have never had a feeling politically

that did not spring from the truths embodied in the Declaration of Independence, which gave liberty not alone to this country but to the world in all future time. If the country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I would rather be assassinated on the spot than surrender it."

These words, of wide currency and often misquoted or misunderstood, are of significance enough to be recalled in their true meaning. It was not the common bathos, of which Lincoln was incapable, that he would forfeit his life to save the country. He would be assassinated rather than to save the country by surrendering the principle of liberty.

No more appalling vista ever met the eye of ruler or statesman than opened before Abraham Lincoln when he en-

tered upon the presidency. As he feelingly said, "Without a name, perhaps without a reason why I should have a name, there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest even upon the Father of his Country." He found the government crumbling under his feet. The South was already in arms, and seven states had repudiated their allegiance to the Union. In his own words of prophecy, soon fulfilled, Freedom and Slavery could no longer dwell together, and the house divided against itself was reeling upon its foundations. In this hour of supreme trial did Abraham Lincoln forget that slavery was wrecking the Union which he was now solemnly sworn to preserve?

As well might he forget the earth on which he trod. He knew that behind

the mask of rebellion was no face but that of the slave-power. His conviction was proclaimed and known that slavery and the Union could not survive together, and it was now his charge to save the Union. He saw the approaching doom of slavery as a sacrifice to the Union. In the interval after his election, while a panic-stricken Congress was on its knees before Secession and the people were little better, he had been urging influential leaders to "hold firm as a chain of steel" against further compromise with slavery. "Have none of it," he says. "The tug has to come, and better now than later." He insisted that no foot of free soil should be thrown as a sop to the slave-power. "On this," he said, "I am inflexible." He rejected the imputation that he

should be thought "willing to barter away the moral principle involved in this contest for the commercial gain of a new submission to the South." Foreseeing that the menace of war would invite or impel the giving of new bonds to slavery, he privately put into the hands of friends in Congress a series of proposals designed to forestall the movement, by preventing any new and substantial concessions. There is little doubt that his influence, if not his hand, appears in the constitutional amendment adopted by Congress on the eve of his inauguration, an historical fragment which disappeared in the tumult of war and is now forgotten. For the credit of the nation, this deserves to be remembered for what it does not contain. Of all the invitations to peace, this

is the most inconsequential. It was designed to write into the Constitution the accepted dogma that Federal power cannot molest slavery within the states where it already exists, and to do no more. The Dred Scott doctrine is neither adopted nor recognized, Congress is left as free as it was before to forbid slavery in the territories, suppress the interstate slave-trade or repeal the fugitive-slave law, and the same power that makes the amendment can unmake it in the future. There is recently disclosed evidence, from his own hand, confirming the belief that Lincoln's unseen interference at this stage was a large, perhaps decisive, factor in saving the nation from the ignominy of the Crittenden compromise or other surrender to the slave-power. By the aid of his

influence this was averted and slavery held at bay to meet the chances of war.

The clue to Lincoln's course toward slavery as president is long open, and there is no higher proof of his wisdom or courage. He had now exchanged the freedom of political debate for the responsibilities of power and constitutional obligation. He was acting a mighty part in the face of the world. Every word must be weighed and every act deliberated. He had to move with caution where a single misstep might be fatal. He had to temporize, and there were occasions when he had to dissemble. Appearing weakest where he was really greatest, he was misunderstood, and the error persists in the face of history.

He realized in the beginning that all must depend upon a united North. The loyal states were honeycombed with the timid or craven and the open sympathizers with rebellion. So conspicuous a personage as Franklin Pierce had written the rebel leader that blood would flow in our own streets at any attempt to coerce the South. The president must steer a course which all the loyal people would follow, or the cause was hopeless. What might appear like weakness under other conditions was now imperative necessity. He could lead only while appearing to follow. Inflexible adherence to this course compelled him to do or forbear much that provoked hostile criticism from the extremists of all views. Denounced on the one hand as afraid to strike at slav-

ery, and on the other as waging an abolition war, he had to keep the peace with Union men of all shades of opinion, that they might be held together in support of the cause. He had qualities that were equal to the task. The anti-slavery radicals scourged him with whips and the pro-slavery party with scorpions, and he submitted in silence and without complaint, serenely confident in his purpose. He had a divine gift of patience, a "saving common sense" that moved by one step at a time, and a courage that could resist his own impulses no less than the clamor of factions. With supreme self-control, and a wisdom that seems inspired, he kept his own counsel and awaited his time.

All this is now familiar history.

There is no point in his career where Lincoln's genius as a leader of men rises higher or marks him more unmistakably as the man of the crisis, and through all this period there is no evidence that his hand was ever stayed by indecision or infirmity of purpose. He was moving steadily, in his own way, to the extinction of slavery.

From the first note he struck, in his inaugural address, he was misunderstood because he was not comprehended. The radical anti-slavery leaders thought they saw a disposition to further compromise, the men of fighting blood a want of courage or resolution. They did not know the man. The address was essentially a piece of political strategy, of the highest order, in which Lincoln

met the occasion with the far-sighted wisdom that was peculiarly his own. He could not but foresee that his appeal for peace was addressed to deaf ears and would be rejected. His principal task that day was to put the cause of the Union in the right and Secession in the wrong, before the country and the world, at the threshold of the impending conflict, and this he did, with the hand of the master.

Of the two mighty problems that confronted Lincoln in dealing with the rebellion, the military and the political, the latter was more complicated and delicate if not more difficult, and of this the slavery question was principally a part. Under strict official responsibility he had to feel his way through a

maze of constitutional doubts and disputes so complex that it was never unraveled. He would have been politically justified in leaving slavery to the course and chance of events. As president, he had no civil power over it. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he could lay hands upon it only as a necessary act of war if emancipation should become essential to military success. His right to interfere with slavery at all was challenged and disputed. So pronounced an anti-slavery man as Seward, the head of his cabinet, was afraid of it, and advised him to leave it alone. He was loudly warned from the North to leave it alone. Lincoln neither hesitated nor delayed. No sooner were the necessary military operations on foot than he began to formulate plans to-

ward the extinction of slavery. In the District of Columbia, within the control of Congress, the way was plain. Far more important than this were the border slave states, wavering between loyalty and treason but still remaining in the Union. That it was vitally necessary to keep them there Lincoln believed and all men agreed. They were no less devoted to slavery, as the event proved, than the states already in rebellion. Nevertheless, Lincoln proceeded to urge upon them a scheme of compensated abolition, which he never forbore while any hope of success remained, pleading with them like a father with his children, with many significant intimations that compulsory emancipation might be the consequence of refusal. It was to no purpose. Their attachment

to slavery was so strong that they would not give it up. In April, 1862, this measure was indorsed by Congress, but events were then moving too swiftly and compensated abolition was left behind.

Written history has strangely missed the true significance of this episode. Anxious as Lincoln was to hold the allegiance of the border states, why should he go aside to press upon them an unpalatable scheme of abolition, at the risk of stimulating their natural sympathy with the other slave states to a degree that might imperil their adherence to the Union?

The question admits of but one answer. Profoundly convinced that slavery and the Union could not survive together, Lincoln realized from the be-

ginning that the extinction of slavery was as necessary to a restored Union as the winning of battles. His appeal to the border states, charged against him as temporizing with slavery, is the first open and unmistakable evidence of his purpose to make an end of it. He began in the localities where it could be reached by peaceful means, clearly within his power. To treat with these states for voluntary abolition would not divide or imperil the North. If he succeeded, he would divide the South, extinguish slavery in a third of its domain, and fatally undermine the whole system. If he failed, the failure would go to justify compulsory emancipation. This is the indisputable meaning of his conduct, confirmed, as we shall see, by the testimony of his own words.

Lincoln's interference with military commanders in dealing with escaped slaves, his "revocation," as it is still called, of Frémont's proclamation of August 30, 1861, the recalling of Cameron's report of December, 1861, on the arming of the black refugees, and the annulling of Hunter's order of May, 1862, brought upon him a storm of hostile criticism. In each case he took the only proper course, for which he had the unanswerable reasons. The military power over slavery was still in dispute, the military necessity on which it must stand was not established, — and this Lincoln afterward declared to be his principal reason for delay, — the people were not yet prepared for emancipation, as the event proved, and a subject involving such vast political consequences belonged to

the head of the government and not to generals in the field. There must be one uniform policy, for the army and the country. He did not revoke Frémont's proclamation, but modified it to conform to the Confiscation Act. In revoking Hunter's order he pointedly declares that he "reserves to himself" the question of military emancipation, and here again he appeals to the border states to abolish slavery under the Compensation Act, with a direct admonition to heed "the signs of the times." He warned Congress and the country in his message of December, 1861, and elsewhere, in words of unmistakable import, that "all indispensable means" must be employed to preserve the Union. In the light of what followed, it is plain that he was pointing toward emancipation.

For all his shortcomings, as they were regarded, and especially for his delay in striking at slavery with the sword of military power, the impatient but undiscerning radicals poured out the vials of their wrath upon him, and multiplied the troubles to which only infinite patience could submit. His acts and omissions were public. As every word he spoke was heard by the enemy, North and South, his motives and purposes could not be disclosed. Conduct born of a wisdom superior to their own was ascribed to reluctance or irresolution by a people who had not found him out. He told the cabinet one day a story of a man who always pretended to be insane when beset by his creditors, and significantly said, "On more than one occasion I have been com-

pelled to appear mad." It is one of the oddities of this singular career that the only scar borne upon the person of the Emancipator was at the hand of a negro and the only lasting impeachment of his character the work of the most zealous opponents of slavery.

The impatient temper of Horace Greeley could not await the cautious but sure-footed steps of the great president toward the freeing of the slaves. His "Prayer of Twenty Millions," in the Tribune, drew from the president a public reply, under date of August 22, 1862, in which appears the much-quoted, misunderstood, and perverted declaration, "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it." Of all the supposed evidences of

Lincoln's willingness to save slavery, this is the most persistent, and in the light of events, the least significant. If it ever afforded any justification for such a view of Lincoln, it was but for a day.

It has long been known that Lincoln's purpose of emancipation became a fixed resolve not later than July, 1862. As early as June 18 he had privately read to the vice-president what is supposed to have been the first sketch of the Proclamation, and about the same time this was shown to another confidential friend. On the vessel returning from Hampton Roads, July 10, he was at work upon this or another draft. Two days later he urged his last appeal upon the border-state men to abolish slavery with compensation, but

in vain. The situation was now vastly different from that of the previous year. In the lurid light of war, the dullest eye was beginning to see that slavery was the backbone of the rebellion. Every soldier's grave was a new testimony against it. The swift movement of events furnished proof that the public feeling against slavery had risen from day to day. In one of the early speeches Lincoln had prefigured the peaceful extinction of slavery as the task, perhaps, of a hundred years, but now a year of war had done the work of a century. In this interval the black republics of Hayti and Liberia were recognized, a treaty concluded with Great Britain for effectual suppression of the slave trade —which Seward declared to be "the great act of this administration"—Con-

gress had abolished slavery in the District of Columbia, excluded it from the territories in the face of the Dred Scott doctrine, thus finally disposed of, practically annulled the fugitive-slave law and superseded the unwieldy Confiscation Act of 1861 by declaring escaped slaves free as captives of war and eligible for military service. The popular approval of these measures seemed to warrant the president in believing that the people would now accept a general emancipation. McClellan warned him that an abolition policy would disintegrate the armies in the field, but he passed this admonition without notice. On July 13 he privately disclosed to Seward and Welles his purpose to decree emancipation. To the assembled cabinet, on July 22, he presented the pre-

liminary proclamation, declaring that he did not seek their advice upon emancipation, as he was resolved upon it, but only suggestions of form or detail. Evidently he was prepared to issue the proclamation at once. The cabinet favored Seward's suggestion to wait for a military success, when the edict might go out upon a wave of popular enthusiasm. The president concurred, and this delayed its issue until the repulse of Lee at Antietam.

The truth, then, is that at the moment when Lincoln penned the letter to Greeley, August 22, he was withholding, in deference to his advisers, the settled decree of emancipation, waiting only for the wings of victory on which a month later it went forth to the world.

Remarkable as Lincoln was for taking the people into his confidence when he could, he was always able, through good and evil report, to keep his own counsel when he must. Later than the Greeley letter, and but a week before the proclamation appeared, a delegation of clergymen came to urge immediate emancipation. He submitted to their reproaches, giving no hint of the true situation, and indeed suggesting obstacles in the way of their desire. The disappointed friends of freedom returned home to meet the proclamation in the newspapers.

Those who point to the Greeley letter, or other fancied evidences that Lincoln was willing to save slavery, are ignorant of the historical facts or too little to comprehend them. The

letter is but another proof of Lincoln's genius for managing men and events. Already resolved upon emancipation, for which he must have the people with him, he seized the occasion of Greeley's protest to make a public declaration which would help to disarm the conservatives of the North against the policy of freedom which he was about to proclaim, as he had disarmed the border states against it by the offer of compensation. It was pure hypothesis to say that he would save the Union if he could without freeing a slave. With equal truth, and as little significance, he might have said that he would save the Union if he could without sacrificing a man in battle. Thousands of slaves were already freed, by course of war, as thousands of men were fallen in the field.

We know that Lincoln realized from the beginning the futility of trying to save the Union with slavery, and he knew, when he wrote the Greeley letter, that he was about to proclaim emancipation. In the light of these facts, the letter can bear no other meaning than that which obviously it bore to Lincoln himself. In the letter to Robinson, of August, 1864, he says:—

"It is true, as you remind me, that in the Greeley letter of 1862 I said: 'If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it.' . . . I continued in the same letter: 'What I do about slavery and the colored race I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more

whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause.' . . . When I afterward proclaimed emancipation and employed colored soldiers, I only followed the declaration just quoted from the Greeley letter that 'I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause.'"

Pending the final act of emancipation, the president submitted to Congress a plan of constitutional abolition, immediately securing the freedom of all slaves emancipated by the events of war, and authorizing a national subsidy, with compensation to loyal owners, upon voluntary abolition by the states. "Without slavery the rebellion could never have existed — without slavery it could not continue." This is the text of a full discussion of the sub-

ject "in its economical aspect," rising at the close to these words of eloquent entreaty: —

"The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows that we know how to save it. We — even we here — hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free — honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just — a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless."

Lincoln already saw what his impatient critics had not yet perceived, that the extinction of slavery could be made final and complete only by writing it into the Federal Constitution. The Proclamation would free the slaves to the extent of military power, but it could not make slavery unlawful in a single state. To accomplish this end, and possibly hasten the return of peace, he would subsidize voluntary abolition, and temper the blow to slaveholders who adhered to the Union. But popular excitement, fed by the preliminary proclamation, was now running too high for this. Nothing followed from his appeal but fresh denunciation of the compensation scheme, by fiery spirits who would risk the freedom of the slave rather than pay ransom for his deliverance.

At the day appointed for the final act, the president was ready. It was not an auspicious time. The proclamation of September, welcomed with shouts of acclaim by the abolitionists and by some of the enfranchised race, was so coldly received by the country that the great states had turned against the president in the ensuing elections. It was yet doubtful whether the people were equal to the policy of freedom, and our arms were now under the shadow of a bloody defeat. Clouds and darkness were before him, but the die was cast and Lincoln could not hesitate. The final decree went forth in the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, making the day forever illustrious in the annals of mankind. The new birth of the American nation into real free-

dom marked the final disappearance of chattel slavery from the Christian world.

Whatever were the limitations upon the legal operation or effect of the proclamation, Lincoln believed it to be, as history has pronounced it, the death-blow of slavery. From this time he stood to it firmly as an act accomplished, making its full observance a condition of every future step toward peace. Throughout the critical years of battle that followed, he rejected with indignant scorn all intimations that slavery might yet be rehabilitated. "There have been men base enough," he said, "to propose to me to return to slavery our black warriors of Port Hudson and Olustee. Should I do so, I should deserve to be damned in time and eternity."

When the question of his renomination came on, he characteristically said, "It won't make much difference who is president if pledged to emancipation and negro soldiers." The appalling slaughter of the 1864 campaigns brought on a peace movement, with intimations that slavery might be restored, upon which the president, then reëlected for a second term, shuts the book in his last message to Congress with these decisive words: —

"I repeat the declaration made a year ago, that while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation or by any of the Acts of Congress. If the people should, by whatever mode or means, make it

an executive duty to reënslave such persons, another, and not I, must be their instrument to perform it."

In the letter to Hodges, of April, 1864, an historical document of the first importance, Lincoln has left a record of the mental process by which he reached emancipation. He always felt the wrong of slavery, he says, but—

"I understood that in ordinary civil administration my oath forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. . . . And I aver that to this day I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution imposed upon me the duty to preserve, by every indispensable means, that government, that nation, of

which the Constitution was the organic law. . . . I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground and now avow it. . . . When in March and May and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the border states to favor compensated emancipapation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come unless averted by that measure. . . . In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

There is some of Lincoln's characteristic self-effacement in this, but the meaning is plain. If it adds little to

what a discerning eye can read from the course of his conduct, it is his own testimony. Restrained by imperative official obligations, he is still looking for ground on which to stand in overthrowing slavery. Indispensable military necessity is such a ground. Without waiting for military necessity, he tries to begin the process of extermination by negotiating for voluntary abolition in the border states. When this attempt fails, he accepts the result as establishing military necessity, and issues the Proclamation.

The military necessity was strenuously denied at the time. Indeed, a numerous party maintained to the end that the whole proceeding was an unwarranted and unlawful usurpation of power. As a purely military question,

it probably must be conceded that no compelling military necessity for emancipation was then, if it was ever, established. Upon the degree of necessity Lincoln had the right to exercise his own judgment, and he cast it in favor of liberty. If he was controlled by events, they were events which his own hand had helped to set in motion.

The germ of the Emancipation Proclamation was in the "divided house" speech of 1858. That bold and startling utterance had a far-reaching influence upon Lincoln's career, and upon the course of history. If the slave-power had any pretext for secession or the appeal to arms in 1861, it was that Lincoln, as a political leader, had changed the front of the victorious party toward slavery

from passive toleration to open hostility, and put the North in an attitude that not only made any further extension of slavery impossible, but fairly endangered its permanent existence in the states. Seeing the full import of the Dred Scott doctrine if accepted as a rule of political action, Lincoln had warned the people, with prophetic insight and solemnity, that the nation must become all slave or all free. The warning went home, and the people had called the prophet to the chair of state. The slave-power read the omen, and saw with the swift instinct of self-preservation, what Lincoln himself must have anticipated, that the seed now sown would bear fruit of an irresistible political movement, in some form, toward the extinction of slavery. The system was now besieged

in its own house. There might have been a capitulation on terms that would not involve bloodshed or ruin, but the slave-power threw away its opportunity. Under the Constitution, the peaceful extinction of slavery could be accomplished only by shutting it up in the states and leaving it to a lingering death by natural decay, hastened, perhaps, by suppression of the interstate slave-trade and repeal of the fugitive-slave law, or by persuading the South to accept compensated abolition. The slave-power, blind with passion, did not see that armed rebellion would put in Lincoln's hand the sword by which slavery could be destroyed at one stroke as a necessary act of war. And so it was done.

By Lincoln's procurement, the Thirteenth Amendment was made the feature of the party convention and platform of 1864. Under this impetus, and the urgent appeal of his last message to Congress, it finally passed that body January 31, 1865. It is known that he exhausted his personal influence, and he was charged with straining his official power, to insure its success. There is some authority for the story, not incapable of belief, that when the Amendment was stalled in the House, the president sent for a friendly leader and said to him, "The amendment must be passed. In this office I have great power. *The amendment must be passed.* Say no more, but go and pass it." A jubilant crowd came to serenade him at the White House upon the event. "This is

the king's cure," he said, "for all the evils. It winds the whole thing up." The doom of slavery was sealed, but the war was not over, nor the Union restored. A few days later, upon his return from the conference at Hampton Roads, Lincoln again attempted a shorter step toward peace with universal emancipation, in a plan presented to the cabinet for a subsidy to all the slave states upon submission to the national authority and ratification of the Amendment. To his open disappointment, this met with no favor. It included a general pardon to rebellion, which few but Lincoln himself would have favored at that stage, and bore an appearance of purchasing the peace now soon to be conquered. Whatever may be thought of this magnanimous proposal, the evi-

dence remains that peace and the complete extinction of slavery were alike the objects foremost in his mind. The title of Lincoln as the Emancipator rests no more upon the Proclamation than upon his fixed resolve to write universal freedom into the Federal Constitution on the crest of the wave of public sentiment, before it could recede and leave the Amendment stranded.

Nothing in Abraham Lincoln's history stands out more plainly than the compelling motive of his public career. It was antipathy to slavery. This brought him out of retirement, at the threat to enslave the Nebraska territory, and devoted him to the cause from which he was never permitted to look back. To no abolitionist was slavery more

abhorrent than it was to Lincoln, not only for its iniquity, but because it endangered the Union. The Constitution, which Garrison's inspired wrath denounced in fhe fiery words of Isaiah as "a covenant with death and agreement with hell," Lincoln accepted, with all its obligations. The abolitionists, whose appeal was addressed only to the public conscience, had no direct and practical remedy for the national evil. Lincoln, at once a moralist, a profound and far-sighted politician and statesman, and a lover of the Union, looked for a remedy and saw that there could be but one. Slavery must be put on the way to its end, by means consistent with the Constitution and the Union. The first step was to arrest its expansion; the next, to prepare the public mind for ultimate

extinction, on the principle that a nation cannot endure half slave and half free. Thus far had he advanced when the power that rules over men and nations opened a shorter way. Every fact of his history points to the belief that, but for the intervention of secession and war, he would have followed with a national scheme of compensated abolition. Historical monuments that cannot be effaced mark the line on which he moved from 1854 to the end of his life. Lincoln hated slavery. He saw and proclaimed that slavery must destroy the Union or be itself destroyed. He was devoted to the Union. Slavery made war upon the Union. The destiny that charged him with the task of saving the Union armed him with the power to destroy slavery, and at his hand slavery

met the fatal blow. It is idle to speculate upon what he might have done. The world knows what he did, and it appears as if foreordained and inevitable.

The perspective of half a century affords a view of this great character unseen by his contemporaries. Historical research has revealed and is still revealing much that was unknown to them. Cautious and deliberate, but sublimely confident in himself and inflexible when resolved, he would brook no interference with his purposes. Not that he would take to himself the glory — nothing is more foreign to his character than this — but he felt that he could reach the end in his own way, and he was not sure of any other way. The springs of history, disturbed at their

source by ignorant or undiscerning criticism that measured this great man by its own imperfect standards, will yet run clear. The conception of Lincoln as hesitating and reluctant before emancipation would be impossible if he had launched the Proclamation in 1861 instead of 1862. It is possible only because he would not be forced by public clamor to act before the time was ripe. To this single feature of his conduct, in the last analysis, must be ascribed the historical myopia that would regard Lincoln as willing to save slavery.

They have studied Abraham Lincoln to little purpose who see in the supreme act of his life any motive less lofty than the act itself. To the eye of the devout, the hand of God was in it and the man divinely appointed to the work. More

than one incident of this unique career suggests, with almost compelling force, the direct intervention of an overruling power. There is much in Lincoln's character that seems inscrutable. The occult and mystic temperament, the prompting voice within him, the distraught moods, the saturating melancholy, the recurring dream, the premonitions of violent death, the minor key in which his whole life was attuned, relieved only by the unfailing strain of humor,—these are not idle tales but established facts. He avowed that he was superstitious, but he was incapable of hypocrisy and made no affectation of religion. Was there a direct light, superior to human wisdom, on the path of this remarkable man? Hear him speak for himself:—

"That the Almighty does make use of human agencies and directly intervenes in human affairs is one of the plainest statements of the Bible. I have had so many evidences of his direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have no sufficient facts upon which to found it. . . . I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know it."

This declaration reflects a peculiar significance upon the words with which he laid the Proclamation before his official council. "God has decided the question, in favor of the slaves."

The psychology of Abraham Lincoln, with all his practical and homely

traits preëminently a man of the spirit, is unexplored. It would task philosophy or science to fathom the depths and trace the conflicting currents of this phenomenal character. Yet of all historic personages he least can be understood without looking into his soul. A man of complete sincerity, the motives of his life are written there, and there they must be read. Upon the crime of human bondage, his soul is an open book. The faith that directed and sustained him in the mighty task of achieving for his country the "new birth of freedom" is revealed, with Hebraic grandeur, in that inspired passage of his last address to the nation: —

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if

God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

Mystery and portent were over and about him to the end. On the morning of his last day, he said to the assembling cabinet, "Gentlemen, something serious is about to happen. I have had a strange dream, and have a presentiment such as I have had several times before, and always just before some important event. . . . But let us proceed to business." The business of the day, following upon the collapse of the rebellion, was to

hasten the return of peace and national unity. With no word of triumph, but pardon and reconciliation on his lips, the travail over, the task accomplished, in a moment he was snatched from the summit of his greatness to pure and imperishable fame.

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